



Dear Councillors,

April 24, 2017

As many of you will remember my team and I began the development of the 2016-2017 Board Strategic Work Plan (SWP) in late April of 2016 and after a broad consultative effort, we presented the finalized plan to GSA Council in October. In early January, my team and I provided an update on our progress on the various initiatives developed in the Plan.

For the final GSA Council meeting for the current team of Directly-Elected Officers, I asked my team to each identify initiatives that they have completed and that they feel have had a notable impact, as well as the initiatives that they are most excited about either tackling next (if they were elected to serve a second term) or to recommend to their successor. Below is a summary of those identified initiatives. Attached you will find a version of the SWP (similar to that which you saw in January) in which initiatives have been colour-coded to reflect either that they are completed or that they are ongoing (some of these have already been initiated and we will recommend to the incoming President and Vice-Presidents that they all be included in future SWPs). The SWP, as it was presented in October to GSA Council, and without the colour-coding, is attached.

Completed Initiatives in 2016-2017

- Advocating against increases to international graduate student tuition
- Re-starting the conversation with senior administration around implementing sustainable funding packages that support an appropriate standard of living for graduate students
- Reviewing the GSA Health and Dental Plan utilizing graduate student feedback gathered through town halls and surveys
- Concluding the U-Pass Agreement Renewal
- Developing guiding questions to assist prospective graduate students in selecting a supervisor and making the decision to pursue graduate studies
- Working with ab-GPAC on various government reviews on the *PSLA* and tuition and funding
- Assisting with finalizing the U of A Sexual Violence Policy
- Restructuring the GSA Board Strategic Work Plan through an intensive graduate student consultation process
- Enhancing graduate student engagement through various GSA events, such as GSA Coffee Breaks, the Winter Chill Out, and an Improv Event
- Promoting mental health and wellness initiatives and support on campus (including completing several collaborative mental health related initiatives, including the establishment of the Days of Action Committee, bringing the Inquiring Mind program to the U of A campus, and hiring an ACCESS clinician to fill a Community Broker Social Work position)
- Actively engaging in selecting new senior administration members, including the Dean of FGSR, Vice-President (Research), and Vice-President (University Relations)
- Active participation on the newly created Residence Life Task Force
- Cultivating a collegial and respectful relationship with University stakeholders and new members of senior University administration (such as the Dean of Students and the Vice-Presidents (Finance & Administration, and Facilities & Operations))
- Successful advocacy to and consultation with FGSR on mentoring, professional development, and internship programs
- Building on discussions with senior administration regarding graduate student supervision
- Collaborating with campus service providers to suggest innovative programming and expanded services for graduate students
- Handling labour compliance and supervisory cases
- Advocating for sustainable, affordable, and well-maintained graduate student housing
- Expanded the GSA's collaboration with FGSR on things such as Departmental Orientations
- Supporting the professional experience leave policy advanced by the FGSR
- Reviewing exam and supervisory policies in collaboration with the FGSR
- Growing our relationship with the Campus Food Bank



Recommended Initiatives for 2017-2018

- Collaborating with other associations and the University to improve resources for student parents and advancing discussions to address student homelessness on campus
- Continuing dialogues concerning how the GSA can assist indigenous graduate students
- Participating in discussions with FGSR, the Provost, and other senior administration regarding graduate student supervision and funding packages that promote a sustainable standard of living, as well as advocating for equitable quality measures and graduate student management plans
- Meeting with graduate students who have concerns, issues, and are in distress due to labour or supervisory issues, and dealing with compliance enforcement on a case-by-case basis
- Continuing labour consultations with GSA Councillors and other GSA members in preparation for CA negotiations
- Working with FGSR on offering a series of 'Managing Up' sessions to provide graduate students with workplace relationship management skills
- Maintaining our partnership with the Campus Food Bank to address graduate students facing food insecurity issues
- Reviewing and streamlining the process of fee collections for Residence Associations and supporting/assisting graduate students living in residences, in partnership with Residence Associations
- Advocating for improved immigration policies for international graduate students
- Investigating strategies to advocate for high quality work spaces for all graduate students
- Advocating for more accessible transit to the Michener Park residence
- Continuing developing mechanisms to encourage graduate student engagement, both with the GSA and within their departmental communities and the University
- Maintaining and enhancing partnerships with Departmental GSAs to spread awareness about the GSA and encourage graduate student engagement
- Engaging with the GSAs from other comprehensive and research intensive universities in Alberta and across Canada to share information, discuss best practices, and collaborate on common issues
- Sustaining a supportive, respectful, professional, and enjoyable work environment for GSA DEOs and supporting the Executive Director's work to ensure a similar environment within the GSA office
- Collaborating with the University on developing a more inclusive, equitable, and diverse campus
- Discussing with the FGSR current opportunities available to graduate students applying for scholarships, grants, and awards to ensure the FGSR's complete support throughout the application process
- Meeting with stakeholders, such as the FGSR and the Career Centre, to discuss the support of entrepreneurship opportunities for graduate students and participating in PD4Grads meetings to assist with the development of PD workshops and events
- Actively engaging, via the FGSR Policy Review Committee, and other similar University committees, with reviews of academic requirements, and the promotion of interdisciplinary and alternative learning opportunities for graduate students, including international exchanges
- Ongoing evaluation of University and GSA services provided to graduate students and promoting the expansion of wellness services on campus

Sincerely,

Sarah Ficko 2016-2017 GSA President